



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Planning Commission

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: 05/12/2005

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 6

SUBJECT: PDC04-092 PLANNED DEVELOPMENT REZONING FROM R-1-8 RESIDENCE ZONING DISTRICT TO A(PD) PLANNED DEVELOPMENT ZONING DISTRICT TO ALLOW UP TO 7 SINGLE-FAMILY DETACHED RESIDENCES ON A 0.95 GROSS ACRE SITE LOCATED ON THE WEST SIDE OF DELMAS AVENUE AT THE TERMINUS OF DOROTHY AVENUE.

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission voted 7-0-0 to recommend that the City Council approve the proposed rezoning, with staff's recommended draft Development Standards modified to allow a minimum 20-foot front setback for an attached garage on the southern-most home and a minimum 5-foot setback from any building to the adjacent future trail corridor.

BACKGROUND

On May 11, 2005, the Planning Commission held a public hearing to consider a Planned Development rezoning from R-1-8 Single-Family Residence to A(PD) Planned Development to allow up to 7 single-family detached residences on a 0.95 gross acre site.

Staff Presentation

Staff indicated that an e-mail from Ken Eklund of the North Willow Glen Neighborhood Association, received after the preparation of the staff report, had been distributed to members of the Planning Commission prior to the hearing (see attached). The e-mail expressed concern regarding a number of issues, including the project's inconsistency with the neighborhood, inappropriate massing of the proposed houses, lack of detached garages and inappropriate architecture. Staff responded that the need for additional work on the massing and architecture were discussed in the staff report and that these issues would be addressed at the PD Permit stage. Staff noted that while detached garages were not proposed, all but one of the houses had garages located in the rear of the house that were not visible from Delmas Avenue.

The Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement recommended approval of the proposed rezoning.

Applicant's Presentation and Public Testimony

Gerry DeYoung, representing the applicant, indicated that the developer would continue to work with Planning staff and the neighborhood to develop appropriate architecture for the proposed residences during the PD Permit process. He noted that the applicant is proposing to set the second story of the houses back from the first story three to five feet. He indicated that there are numerous examples of new, larger homes that fit well into existing neighborhoods in Willow Glen and pointed to Settle Avenue as an example. Mr. De Young expressed concern about two aspects of staff's draft Development Standards. He requested that the proposed 23-foot garage setback for the southerly-most unit be reduced to 20 feet to allow a larger rear yard, and that the required setback of 15 feet from the rear yard of the adjacent existing residence to the north of the subject site be reduced to 10 feet. He indicated that the applicant was neutral in regard to the required removal of 2 guest parking spaces at the mouth of the private street and that parking had been a primary concern expressed at the community meeting.

Ken Eklund of the North Willow Glen Neighborhood Association (NWGNA) provided an overview of the character of the existing neighborhood surrounding the project site, providing photographs of existing residences along Delmas and Dorothy Avenues. He noted that existing vintage homes exhibited a variety of architectural styles, but that generally they were relatively small with porches and detached garages. He stated that the project would create a significant difference in the streetscape if the proposed 3,000 square-foot, two-story structures replace the existing smaller, one-story structures. He expressed concern that the project would create a two-story "wall of homes."

Harvey Darnell, also of NWGNA, indicated a desire to retain the three existing historic homes on the site and expressed concern regarding the precedent the proposed project would set in the neighborhood. He stated that if the existing residences could not be saved, it was important that the applicant improve the massing and architecture with such techniques as second-story setbacks and wrap-around porches to blend better with the existing neighborhood. He indicated concern that adequate parking be provided and noted that access and visibility should be provided to the trail at the rear of the project.

A resident of Dorothy Avenue expressed concern regarding the narrowness of Delmas Avenue and the impact the new project would have on traffic in the area.

Ed Rast of the Willow Glen Neighborhood Association indicated concern that re-use of the historic homes on the project property was not proposed, but stated that he understood that two of the three existing houses were in some disrepair. Mr. Rast pointed out that it was clear that the property would redevelop at some point in the future and the Planned Development Zoning process gave the community more input into the design of the project than individual homes built with only building permits. He echoed concerns of the previous speakers regarding the importance of ensuring that the proposed houses fit into the pattern of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Levy asked whether the removal of the parking on the private street was an issue for the applicant, to which Mr. DeYoung acknowledged that the removal of the two spaces on the private street would not drop the project below the parking requirements of the Residential Design Guidelines.

Commissioner James noted that not all of the second floor of the residences appeared to be set back from the first story. Mr. De Young answered that this was true for the conceptual designs, but that the applicant would try to create homes that had a variety of planes on their facades.

The Planning Commission then closed the public hearing.

Planning Commission Discussion

Commissioner Levy commented that the proposed 3-foot minimum setback to the trail at the rear of the project was not sufficient. He also agreed with the applicant that a 20-foot garage setback for the southerly unit could allow a larger rear yard for the unit. He questioned staff regarding the setback issues raised by the applicant.

Staff indicated that the 3-foot setback could be increased to 5 feet, and that the houses could be reduced in size slightly if necessary to provide this additional separation from the trail. Staff indicated that the requested 20-foot setback for the attached garage on the southern-most home was acceptable, given the overall project design. Staff stated that the applicant had made significant improvements to the project in response to staff and neighborhood comments and that the neighborhood compatibility issues appropriate to the Zoning stage, such as street design, lotting pattern and garage orientation, had been fairly well addressed. Staff indicated that massing and architecture were issues that would be addressed through the Planned Development Permit process and that measures recommended by the Single Family Design Guidelines, such as significantly setting back the second story from the first story, would be used to ensure that the proposed residences fit into the pattern of the existing neighborhood. Staff clarified that the proposed 15-foot setback from the rear yard of the existing adjacent residence was less than the 20 feet recommended by the Residential Design Guidelines and should not be further reduced as requested by the applicant. Staff further clarified that, based on the Residential Design Guidelines, the project required 8 guest parking spaces in addition to the garage parking and driveway aprons, and that the applicant was proposing 15 (including 9 available along the Delmas frontage and 6 on the site.) Staff indicated that this number was excessive and that staff had eliminated some parking at the easterly end of the private street to prevent it from looking like a parking lot. Staff stated that it appeared that additional spaces could be located on the residential properties to the rear of the site.

Commissioner James made a motion to adopt staff's Draft Development Standards, revised to require a 5-foot minimum setback to the trail in the rear of the project. Commissioner Levy clarified and Commissioner James concurred, that this motion included the 20-foot garage setback from Delmas Avenue agreed to by staff.

Commissioner Zito noted that good compromises have been made on this project and that the applicant appeared willing to work with staff and the neighborhood.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

A notice of the public hearing was distributed to the owners and tenants of all properties located within 500 feet of the project site. A community meeting was held for this project at the Gardner Community Center on December 2, 2004. Community members were not opposed to the

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development of the property, but expressed concern over the size and architecture of the proposed homes, the lack of detached garages and the need for adequate parking. The staff report was available on the Planning Department web site one week prior to the original Public Hearing date. Staff has been available to discuss the project with interested members of the public.

COORDINATION

This project was coordinated with the Department of Public Works, Fire Department, Police Department, Environmental Services Department and the City Attorney.

CEQA

A Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted by the Director of Planning on May 11, 2005, File No. PDC04-092.


for STEPHEN M. HAASE
Secretary, Planning Commission

Attachment

cc: Gerry DeYoung, Ruth & Going, Inc., P.O. Box 26460, San Jose, CA 95150
Brandon Au, Stonebridge Development, 1777 N Milpitas Blvd, Suite 338, Milpitas, CA 95035



PDC04-092

Schreiner, Edward

From: Ken Eklund [mailto:terguy@writerguy.com]
Sent: Friday, May 06, 2005 3:58 PM
To: Edward Schreiner
Subject: Comments for public file on Little Delmas #1 (PDC04-092, I believe)

Dear Mr. Schreiner:

I reviewed today the latest plans for the PDC04-092 project – (seven 3,000-sq-ft units on Little Delmas). On behalf of the neighborhood, I would like to bring several community concerns to your attention:

1. Inconsistency with neighborhood scale. This is a big issue. The project proposes homes that are two and three times the size of other homes in the neighborhood, yet packed more densely than other homes in the neighborhood.
2. Inappropriate massing. The project's revised design situates five of the seven homes to the street, and thus shifts the inappropriate home massing directly onto the public streetscape.
3. Inconsistency with neighborhood character and pattern. This is another big issue. The project proposes a block of homes that might have been air-dropped from some entirely different neighborhood.
4. Lack of detached garages. I do think that the revised plan is a huge improvement over the previous design, which featured "front-end loader" garages. However, the attached garages hail from an entirely different era than that of our vintage neighborhood, and add to the house massing that is a jarring inconsistency with the neighborhood character. Attached garages also isolate the home residents from the little back yard open space they have, which discourages use of these spaces as green spaces.
5. Tree survey. Mature trees are one of an older neighborhood's most valuable - and irreplaceable - assets. The neighborhood will press to conserve every tree possible. I haven't seen a tree survey for this project, detailing the tree assets and the measures taken to preserve them.
6. Community feedback. Neighbors evaluate projects such as this 'in their spare time' and must be given sufficient notification and access to information. After the initial community meeting, there has been no outreach to community members that attended.
7. Lack of trail access. The project apparently has no access to the public trail that bounds it to the southwest. The neighborhood communicated very clearly to the developer that access to the trail is important, for happiness of project residents and to keep the trail safe and make it an asset to the area.

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8. Lack of clarity on trail visibility. It's unclear how much visibility the trail will have from the homes and yards of the project. Low see-through fencing, as well as physical access, are necessary to keep the trail safe and make it an asset to the area.

9. Troubling, contradictory historic report. The project's historic report notes that the existing vintage homes on the project are well-maintained, attractive and retain the integrity of their vintage character. The report goes on to assert that modifications and modernizations to other houses on the Delmas streetscape have eroded its character, but does not cite any examples or give any factual data to support this assertion. The report thus says that the existing homes are important contributors to the street's vintage character – contradicting its own conclusion. The report should give a more detailed accounting of the street's vintage character and its asserted erosion (because if the character isn't eroded before this project, it certainly will be eroded after it).

10. Lack of architectural honesty. This is another big issue. The project's home designs lack architectural honesty; vintage stylings are used decoratively at best to try to cover what are unmistakably modern shapes and masses. (In the case of Home Plan B, there is not even an attempt to cover the lumpy modernism.) Architectural elements are a statement of an aesthetic; taken together, they communicate an idea to the viewer. Vintage homes reflect this honest pursuit of an idea, which is why vintage homes and neighborhoods command a premium beyond their sticks and mortar. Homes which use architectural elements as mere decoration create a discord in a vintage neighborhood.

11. Lack of clarity on open space. Our city is running at a deficit in park space per capita, and also running out of money to build and maintain parks and open space. It's critical, therefore, that new projects hold to standards of open space, to avoid adding to the demand for existing park space. Where does this project stand in providing common open spaces?

Thank you for an opportunity to comment. I appreciate being kept informed about this project and similar ones.

Best Regards,

Ken Eklund

North Willow Glen

408-280-1441